

# **JONES DENTAL OFFICE**

**Constructed: 1943**

**Address: 40 West Main**

The quaint little building at 40 West Main, has a notoriously benign past. It has never been a beer joint or shoot-'em-up saloon. Nor have Lehi's finest ever raided the place. And no wild-eyes boozed-up cowboy ever rode his horse through the front door.

Some older folk, however, have told me that in their early years the building housed a torture chamber. Actually this was in reference to the pre-novocaine era when Dr. J.G. Jones practiced dentistry on the premises. This notable "driller and filler" came to Lehi in 1931, during the depths of the Depression, after purchasing Dr. Harold Christensen's dental practice. His office was then in the Southworth Building just north of the State Bank of Lehi (98 West Main). The following year Jones took a physician, Dr. Val Sundwall into practice with him, though this arrangement was only short-lived.

In late 1934 Dr. Jones announced that he had purchased the property at 40 West Main, an empty lot situated between Gilchrist Hardware Store and the Mountain Bell Telephone office. workmen began preparing the site for the new dental office on September 24th. The brick and stucco work was completed by late November.

As a boy I presumed that this white, Spanish-styled building had been influenced by the Ware and Treganza designed Memorial Building which had been completed in 1926. It is more correct, however, to label the architectural style of the Jones Building as Art Deco. This term is a brief reference to the "Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes" which was held in Paris in 1925. This art form, based on the geometric forms derived from cubism, was the rage of the late 1920's and 1930's, although its influence is seen in no other Lehi building.

Dr. Jones began seeing patients in his new office on December 3, 1934. The 6 December 1934, *Lehi Sun*, (not at all biased in its reporting), commented

that the place was “undoubtedly the most artistic and attractive dental office in the state.”

The office, in addition to such routine features as a reception area, examination room, laboratory, and rest rooms, was elaborately decorated. Patients were particularly pleased with the arched ceilings and ornate chandeliers throughout the place. It helped to reduce the anxiety of the whirring dental drill awaiting them.

In August 1942 Dr. Jones moved his dental practice to Provo. Roy and Agnes Lott bought his former Lehi office and converted it into their residence, which it remained until their deaths. While it now seems unusual for a family to live in our downtown commercial district, it was quite common then. After Mrs. Lott died, the building became home to several different offices. In the late 1960's Boley Realty was there. Arnie Cardon, representative of the Farmer's Insurance Group, shared the facilities during 1967.

On May 6, 1968, Marlin Peterson opened Peterson's Electronics and Appliance at 40 West Main. He featured Motorola television and clock radios, car radios, car stereos and various accessories.

The Peterson's moved elsewhere a year later and for nearly fifteen years 40 West Main was vacant. In March 1986 the Ensign-Bickford Company leased the space. Wholly owned by a Connecticut family corporation, Ensign-Bickford has existed for more than 150 years in the eastern U.S. The firm's early reputation was built on their safety fuses, prima cords, and non-electric blasting caps. Today the company, with headquarters in Simsbury, Connecticut, is best known for its manufacture of percussion explosives used primarily in mining industries.

While the local Ensign-Bickford office is at 40 West Main, its explosives manufacturing plant is located on the north end of the Lake Mountains near the Peck claybeds. The local branch employs three people. One can often see their huge trucks parked in the alley behind their office. Recently Ensign-Bickford vacated the premises and the building is currently unoccupied.

While our Main Street district has many older buildings and edifices with significantly more important histories, no other downtown structure has more local architectural singularity than this one.